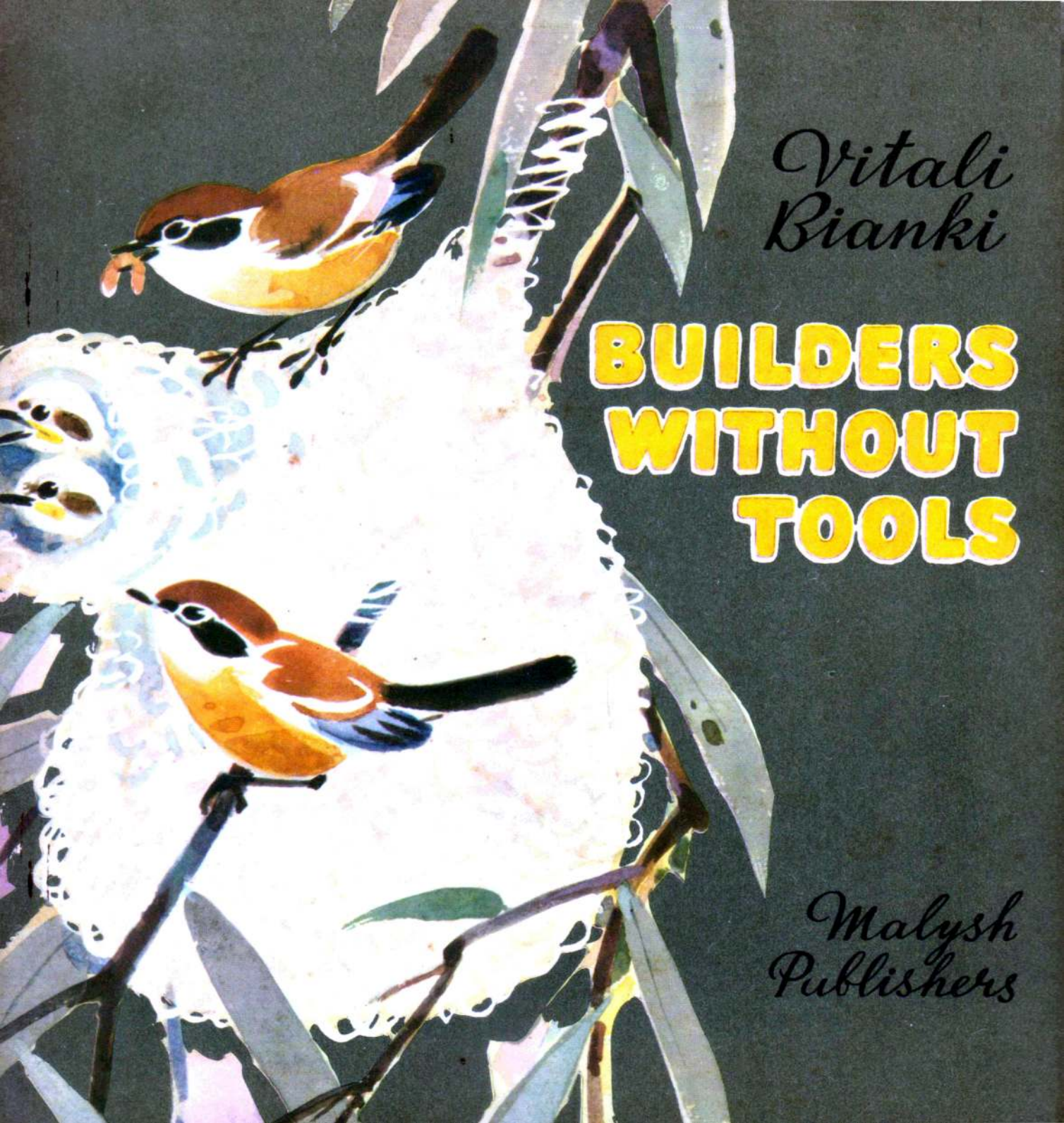


Vitali Bianki

BUILDERS WITHOUT TOOLS

Malysh Publishers

Try to solve my riddle: "She built a log cabin. She'd no hands and no chopper, but that couldn't stop her!" What kind of a house did she build?

Why, a bird's nest!

I looked and, sure enough, there was Magpie's nest built of dry sticks that were like little logs. The floor was made of

packed clay. It was strewn with straw. In the middle of the nest there was an entrance. The roof was made of twigs. A real little log cabin! As for a chopper, Magpie never set claw to one of those.

I felt very sorry for birds. It must be so hard for them to build their homes with no chopper and no hands! I began to wonder how I could make life easier for them.

I could not give them hands. That was for sure. But what about a chopper? I could find a little one for them.

I did find a chopper and ran into the garden.

There, sitting on the ground among the tussocks, I saw Night-Jar.

"Night-Jar, Night-Jar, is it hard for you to build a nest with no hands and no chopper?"

"Oh, I don't build a nest," said Night-Jar. "This is where I hatch my eggs."

Night-Jar got up. There in a hollow between the tussocks lay two lovely, marble-veined eggs.

"Well," I thought, "no hands or choppers are needed here!"

I ran on.

I came to a river, looked around and saw Willow Tit among the bushes and branches. With her pretty little bill she was gathering fluff from the willows.

"What are you going to do with that fluff, Willow Tit?" I asked.

"I'm making my nest out of it," she said. "My nest is as fluffy and soft as your mitten."

"Well," I said to myself, "you don't need a chopper for gathering fluff."

I ran on.

I came to a house. Under the eaves I saw Swallow. She was as busy as could be building a nest out of clay. She scooped up the clay from the bank of the stream with her beak. In her beak she carried it. She smoothed the clay with her beak, too.

"Well," I thought, "my little chopper will be of no use here, so it's no good showing it to Swallow."

I ran on.

I came to a wood. I looked up and there on a fir-tree I saw Song Thrush's nest. What a lovely sight that nest was, to be sure! Outside it was all covered with green moss. Inside it was as smooth as a cup.

"What did you use to build such a nice nest?" I asked. "Tell me what you lined it with."

"I made it with my claws and beak," Song Thrush said. "I covered the inside with plaster made of little bits of wood that I crumbled in my beak."

"Oh, well," I thought, "I've come to the wrong place again. I shall have to find a bird who goes in for carpentery."

Then I heard somebody in the wood going, "Rap-tap-tap. Rap-tap-tap."

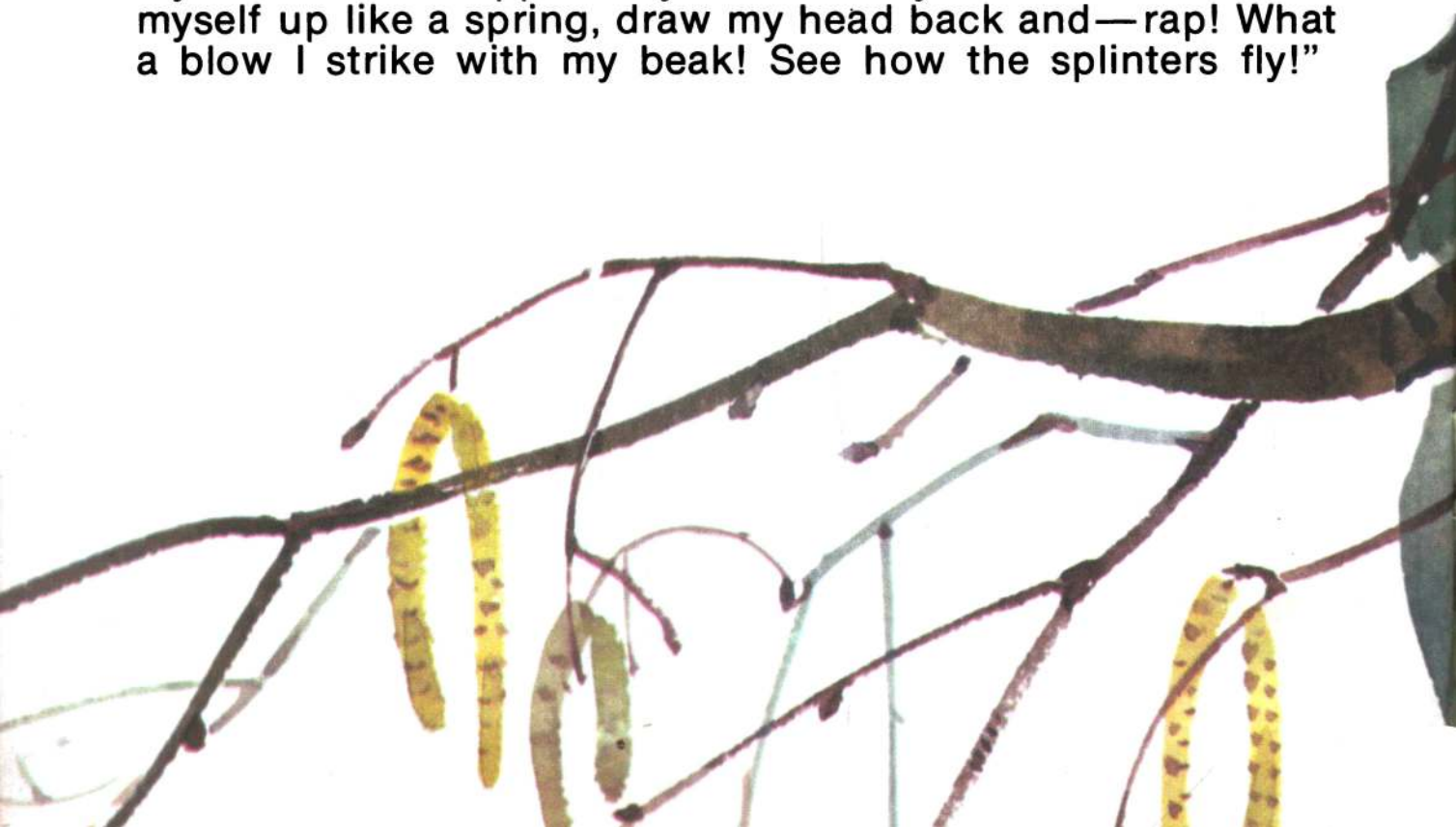
I headed that way and saw Woodpecker.

She was clutching the bark of a birch-tree and, like a carpenter, was chiselling out a hollow where she would bring up her little ones.

"Woodpecker, Woodpecker, stop tapping. You must have a bad headache. Look what a fine present I've brought you: a real chopper!"

Woodpecker looked at the chopper and said,

"Thank you for thinking of me, but your chopper is of no use to me. I like working with my beak. Look! I hold on with my claws and support myself with my tail. Then I double myself up like a spring, draw my head back and—rap! What a blow I strike with my beak! See how the splinters fly!"



Woodpecker made me feel foolish. It seemed that all the birds were builders without tools.

At last I saw Eagle's nest. It was a big heap of thick sticks perched on the highest pine-tree in the wood.

"There," I thought, "is somebody who needs a chopper to cut sticks with."

I went up to the pine and cried,

"Eagle, Eagle, I've brought you a little chopper!"

The Eagle spread her wings and said,

"I thank you, my lad! Throw it onto my nest. I shall pile more sticks on it. That will make my nest stronger than ever. A really fine nest it will be!"

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